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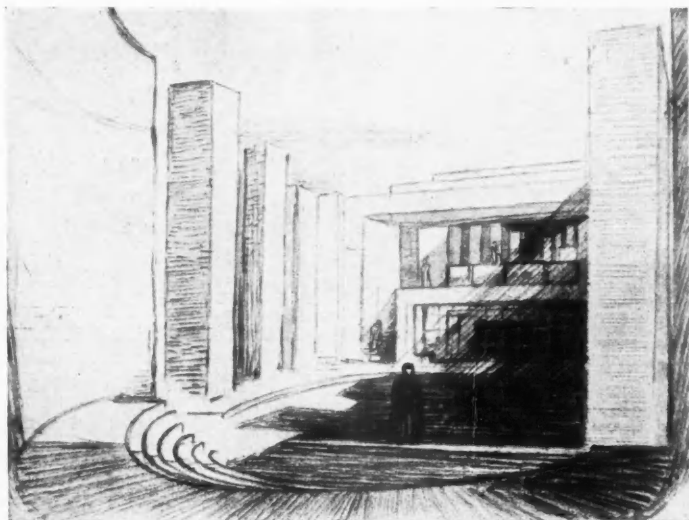
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JUNE M·CM·XXI

Number 8



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THE FRONTISPIECE TO "THE
THEATRE ADVANCING." See p. 61.

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THE CENSORSHIP OF RESTORATION PLAYS

By Montague Summers.

IT is often loosely thought, and has sometimes even been asserted, but very mistakenly, that in the reigns of Charles II. and his immediate successors, the age of Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, Shadwell, and Congreve, there was no Censorship nor surveillance of the stage, that dramatists could write and actors represent any scenes they would without the slightest danger of censure and blame. It will not be impertinent to cite from many instances a few particular examples which conclusively show that the theatre of Charles II. was not the reckless unlicensed saturnalia vulgar error has pictured it to be, but that a pretty close watch was kept upon the stage, and complaints not unseldom led to serious results for those concerned.

The Cheats, a capital comedy by John Wilson, was produced in March, 1662, and in a letter dated the 28th of that month we find "The new play called *The Cheats* has been attempted on the stage; but it is so scandalous that it is forbidden." Government had suspended the performances, and the play, although it had passed the official Censor, was again examined by Waller and Sir John Denham acting under the King's express directions, "his Majesty being informed that there were in a new comedy lately acted at the theatre, many things of a scandalous offensive nature." Fortunately we possess the original MS. of the play with the Censor's markings. Such words and phrases as "Faith; troth; by all that's good; 'fore George; by the faith of a soldier; the devil take 'em; send him to Abram's bosom," are all remorselessly deleted. One cannot think that they would be excised today. There was in *The Cheats* one character in particular which caused great annoyance—Scruple, a nonconformist minister, a delightful portrait—it would be wrong to call it a caricature. It is not one whit exaggerated, as perhaps are in some slight degree Dickens' Stiggins and Chadband. And yet Waller and Denham struck out his most characteristic speeches, which would in a modern theatre assuredly pass without any comment save laughter.

15th April, 1667, Pepys went "to the King's house by chance . . . so full as I never saw it . . . and many people went away for want of room." The play was a new one, *The Change of Crownes* by Edward Howard, "a great play and serious." One character, a "country-gentleman come up to Court," was acted by the famous John Lacy. There were some sharp hits at the venality of the nobles. That same evening Lacy was imprisoned, the play was suppressed and has never been printed, the actors were severely reprimanded and for a while it seemed as if the theatre would be closed.

12th August, 1682, Lady Slingsby, our first titled actress, was arrested for having two days before spoken an epilogue, some lines of which were said to have reflected upon the Duke of Monmouth. Mrs. Behn, who wrote the epilogue, was also ordered into custody.

In 1687 was produced *The Lucky Chance*, a comedy by Mrs. Behn. Some rumour had been spread that it was "A Comedy of Intrigue," whereupon "Dr. Davenant out of Respect to the Commands he had from Court, to take care that no indecency should be in plays, sent for it and nicely look'd it over, putting out anything he but imagin'd the criticks would play with. After that, Sir Roger L'Estrange read it and licens'd it. . . . Then Mr. Killigrew, who more severe than any, from the strict order he had, perus'd it with great circumspection."

In 1682 a new play by Shadwell, *The Lancashire Witches*, had been in rehearsal a fortnight, when the script was demanded by the Lord Chamberlain, who struck out several long scenes, which he characterised as "most dangerous." For a time it was doubtful if the play would be allowed at all. Shadwell printed in italics the portions omitted on the stage, so we know exactly what was forbidden. Some dozen or so speeches, however, which were expunged from the original prompt book, were not even permitted to be published. The character chiefly complained of was "Smerk: Chaplain to Sir Edward Hartfort; foolish,

knavish, popish, arrogant, insolent; yet for his interest, slavish." The play opens with a dialogue between Smerk and Sir Edward, in which the latter expresses strong views against auricular confession and derides Smerk's office, telling him he is "Bell-wether to a silly flock." This whole dialogue of 150 lines was ordered to be entirely omitted. Several equally lengthy scenes are cut in later acts, as well as such incidental passages as: "Between you and I, how many Sacraments are there?" "How many? by my soul, there are seven, how many would there be, think you?"

Last year considerable discussion was aroused by a play called *The Unknown*. A whole conclave of divines attended a special performance, a bishop addressed this audience, and various distinguished individuals solemnly declared through the medium of the daily newspapers that the play raised most intricate and profound problems. Anything more thin, anything more trashy, anything more superficial than the scenes of *The Unknown*, it has seldom, if ever, been my lot to witness. There were no problems which could not have been answered by the immaturest theologian acquainted with but a few pages of S. Thomas Aquinas; there was no philosophy, merely a string of silly childish whimperings and complaints; the play was obviously prejudiced and in shocking taste; technically it was grossly incorrect; and, worst of all, it was badly written and tedious to a degree. Incidentally the country clergyman and his wife were the most inept and idiotic couple. Shadwell's Smerk would have shone as a scholar and a gentleman in contrast to their vapid buffoonery. Yet there were those who took *The Unknown* seriously; there were those whom it incommoded and perturbed. Had it seemed sincere, had it been passably well written, the case were different. I have little doubt that *The Unknown* would not have been permitted on the Restoration stage with its saner, broader outlook.

One reason perhaps why the Restoration theatre has met with a certain amount of reprobation, is on account of what we should now consider the coarseness of the language. Every thinking person at once recognizes how idle such a line of argument is. Were a modern author to make his characters use

the same expressions and terms of speech as do the heroes of Otway, Shadwell, or Congreve, he would indeed be artistically and fundamentally in error. Modes in conversation change. "God forbid that I should be ashamed to mention what God was not ashamed to create," wrote S. Clement of Alexandria. In the Middle Ages talk was far cruder and far rougher than in the time of Charles II. We have become nicer and more refined than we were two centuries and a half ago. Mere expression, however, is superficial, and matters little save that the language loses and has lost much vigour and exactness, much verbal force and beauty.

There can be no doubt that Macaulay's essay on the Restoration dramatists is largely responsible for the disfavour into which that period once fell. Of more recent years his ignorant and partial verdict has been reversed. For Macaulay in all essentials based himself upon Jeremy Collier, than whom few have wielded a more fanatic and atrabilious pen. His chief work, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, is a compilation of the most unexampled tedium. The man had absolutely no sense of humour. He rages against Otway because in *The Orphan* a chaplain is addressed as "thou" instead of the more formal "you." In *An Evening's Love* Jacinta, who is disguised as a Moorish woman, cries "by Mahomet," an expression Collier cites as profane. The man had lost all sense of proportion. He even goes so far as to bring forward Aristophanes, who would, he declares, have been scandalized by Dryden or Vanburgh. This absurdity was recently repeated with great gravity by a modern writer in a sententious article. Can Collier and his successor know anything of the spirit of the Athenian Comic Drama? Can they have glanced at, much less read, the *Lysistrata*, the *Ecclesiazusae*?

In November, 1920, the Phoenix produced Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. The scenes between Antonio and Aquilina, which had been expunged from all acting versions for nearly 200 years—it is believed they were last played about 1735—were restored in their entirety. Most writers on Otway have mentioned these episodes with an uplifting of the hands and a shaking of the

head, with apologies and sour condemnations. Indeed, there are only two of Otway's critics, of whom Taine was one, who have drawn attention to the power and masterly vigour with which Aquilina and Antonio were treated, and who insist that these characters are essential to the play. This judgment in the Phoenix revival was amply, and more than amply justified.

A writer in *The Times*, 16th November, 1920, speaking of the plays produced by the Phoenix said:—"Wave upon wave of nicety has broken in vain upon the neck of their frankness . . . the present

generation awakes anew to the interest, the liveliness, the dramatic power—in a word the fun, of the tragedies and comedies."

Restoration plays, for all the change of external manners and mere vocabulary, are perennially true. From them we can gain very great emotional and intellectual pleasure. Certainly they depict men as they were and are, vicious as well as virtuous, hypocrites as well as saints, base as well as noble, not as wholly stainless, perfect, and impeccable. Such a drama is vitally alive with the eternal life of genius and humanity.

NEWS FROM NORTH & SOUTH

[Owing to exceptional pressure on our space, communications from several Affiliated Societies are unavoidably held over.]

THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY.

The third play in the repertory of religious drama that is being adopted by the Kelly Dramatic Society, "A Mystery Play in Honour of the Nativity of Our Lord," by R. H. Benson, was played on May 5th.

In a simple and natural manner, and without the usual devices for producing dramatic effects, this beautiful little play was acted by the people of Kelly in a fine old stone barn. The singing was unaccompanied, and consisted for the most part of carols, one carol tune being of particular interest as that sung to "While Shepherds Watched" by most West Country carol-singers. No make-up of any description was used, and there was no artificial lighting, but the rays of the afternoon sun shone through the great barn doors, and were regulated by opening and closing shutters. This natural lighting was specially impressive in the angel scenes, where a very beautiful and translucent effect was produced, and there was a total absence of any glitter and tawdriness.

The costumes, which are the property of the Village Drama Society, were soft in colouring, the only strong colours used

throughout being the blue of the Madonna, and the Italian dresses of the kings.

E. U. OULESS.

SHAKESPEAREAN FESTIVAL AT MORECAMBE.

The festival, which took the form of two concerts, was held on April 22nd and 23rd.

Excerpts from various of Shakespeare's plays given as follows:—"To be or not to be" from "Hamlet." "The Court Scene" from "The Merchant of Venice," "The Balcony Scene" from "Romeo and Juliet," "The Rostrum Scene" from "Julius Cæsar," and "The Sleep Walking Scene" from "Macbeth," more than gratified the most critical and appreciative of audiences.

The most exquisite costumes supplied by the Drama League and the admirably effective scenery, arranged by the local theatre, lent an added charm and grace to the production.

At the end of the concluding performance, Mr. W. H. Counsell, the president, voicing the sentiments of audience and players alike, warmly commended the leader, Mrs. Lee, whose characteristic energies and ability had made the festival a huge success, both from an art and a financial point of view.



THE JOURNAL OF
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Telephone: GERRARD, 3157.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal

Arrangements for the Annual Celebration of the Drama League are now almost complete, and within the next few days all members will have in their hands the full programme together with an invitation to the Reception to be held at the Albert Hall on the evening of Friday, July 1. H.R.H. Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyle, will welcome the guests on behalf of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art. Music and dramatic scenes will form part of the evening's entertainment, which will commence at 9 o'clock. An hour earlier Mr. Edward J. Dent will deliver a lecture on the modern theatre movement in Germany. On the afternoon of the same day the Annual General Meeting will be held at Seaford House, Belgrave Square, by kind permission of Lord Howard de Walden.

On the preceding day, Thursday, June 30, the League will hold a public meeting in the Great Hall, King's College, in support of the Shakespeare for Schools Movement. The Central Shakespeare Committee are organising an Emergency Fund among the teachers and their school-children, to carry on the Shakespeare work pending the reversal of the L.C.C. Auditor's now notorious ruling. The King's College meeting will, we hope, rally the support of the

general public to a cause as urgent as it is well deserving.

At the Annual Meeting a full discussion will be invited on the recommendations of the special committee, which include the establishment of a Theatre Club in London, and the definite formulation of the League's policy in regard to the National Theatre. In this connection it is a pleasure to announce that the National Shakespeare Memorial Committee has accepted the offer of the League's co-operation, and that the first of a series of League meetings in support of the New Shakespeare Company will be held at Bath on Friday, June 3. Mr. Bridges Adams will lecture on the plays which his company will present at the Theatre Royal, Bath, during the following week. Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth will speak on behalf of the Drama League.

On another page will be found a list of the printed and MS. plays recently donated to the Drama League by Miss Horniman. The value of the gift will be obvious at a glance, and as the best token of our appreciation of their value, the Executive Committee have decided to lay the plays at the disposal of the League's members on the following terms: Single copies will be lent for one fortnight to any member making application and on payment of the necessary postage. Where the whole set of a particular play is required for an actual production, the entire number of copies will be sent, together with the annotated prompt copy, for a fee of 5s. plus cost of postage. Applications will, of course, be dealt with in strict rotation. No set of plays may be kept for more than four weeks if required by another member or affiliated society.

The Plays and Publications Committee announce that their long-awaited list of Recommended Plays is now complete, and that it will be published in the middle of June by the Poetry Bookshop. Members of the League may obtain copies at the special price of 1s. (postage 2d.) on application to the Secretary. No member will be supplied with more than one copy on the special terms. The price for further copies will be the same as that charged to the general public, viz., 1s. 6d. net.

GORDON CRAIG'S NEW BOOK

Reviewed by Norman Wilkinson.

"The Theatre Advancing." By E. Gordon Craig. Constable and Co. 31s. 6d. net.

EDWARD GORDON CRAIG'S work has been a spark that has set alight a European bonfire of modern theatre production. His influence is too far-reaching to be discussed in detail, but one must mention the effect of his work in the Rheinhardt Theatre, the Moscow Art Theatre, and Granville Barker's Theatre—there are so many more—the list will be too long. The son of our most delightfully capricious actress has inherited his mother's charm, and in this book, as well as in his former ones, he is always inspiring but not always logically convincing. But as, when Ellen Terry comes on to the stage there is a sense of a fresh breeze of health-giving air, so there is when Gordon Craig gives us his thoughts in writing. That, I think, is the essential quality which has inspired a movement so wide in the theatre to-day.

He loves, like all Englishmen, sport—his is the sport of Theatre Art. He takes a generous view of the value of his ideas and one feels that he would appreciate Granville Barker's message on the occasion of a dinner given to him by friends in London "he realized he was a good enough man to crib from."

A detailed criticism of "The Theatre Advancing" would be nearly as long as the book itself. But one can introduce it to readers of "Drama" in a general way.

The whole of this book makes me think of a magnificent avenue with a theatre at the end of it. It must be a beautiful theatre, but the avenue is almost longer than the circumference of the earth, and the trees on either side are so beautiful that one lingers and *never* reaches or even catches a glimpse of the theatre!

Mr. Roger Fry said (as a quotation in this book points out) that Gordon Craig "will have no less than the dramatic kingdom of heaven on earth." I must go one further!—but always thank Gordon Craig for his beautiful avenue of thought.

There is truth in what Mr. P. P. Howe says of him: "Mr. Craig is a prophet.

Like all prophets he is wrong. And, like all prophets he is valuable."

To my mind the one main point on which Gordon Craig is sound is expressed in this book thus: "When literary men shall be content and patient enough to study the art of the Theatre as an art separate from the Art of Literature, there will be nothing to prevent us from welcoming them into the house." That may be taken as a motto for anybody working in any separate art. One may put it another way—if you are going to do it, do it and make yourself so proficient that it is *your* art. In another passage he says, "... I am an artist. I love so much *beautiful* things," but then a little further on he says, "I dislike so much the tyranny of stations and the noises of the trains"—that is what Ruskin stumbled over fifty years ago. His logic of beauty and of use do not always agree. I myself can see beauty in a perfectly carried out battalion parade. But I hated being a soldier!

To my mind the most beautiful part of this book is "A letter to Ellen Terry." It gives a real glimpse of the technical side of the theatre, and the feeling of son and mother. In the chapter "A Durable Theatre," he asks for a development equal to that of Christianity. There is a firm basis of truth in this, as the theatre originated in a sacred ceremonial, so it might go back to it. But we are asking for a superman—at least Gordon Craig is doing so—"See Appendix A"—he might well adopt a slightly more "classic" style. He takes a positive delight in trying to muddle the minds of his readers—the Terry capriciousness again!

There too in "Theatrical Reform" he goes against his own principles and says, to all intents and purposes, that enthusiasm to get on with reform is wrong—he adopts a *dolce far niente* attitude—succumbs to a feeling of inertia. And then after a peaceful sleep he wakes up "like a giant refreshed with wine." "Hail once more," he cries, "to that divine arrogance which knew that the obedience of the many, to the judgement of one, meant happiness to the mass of men"—how like him!

MISS HORNIMAN'S GIFT

The following is a list of the plays presented to the British Drama League by Miss Horniman, being the copies used by her for production during her management of the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. In nearly every case there is a full set of actor's copies or parts, together with a fully annotated "prompt" copy. One-act plays are indicated by an asterisk. For conditions of loan see page 60.

- | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Arabian, M.A.</i> | Trespassers will be Prosecuted. | <i>Davies, H. H.</i> | Cousin Kate. | The Mollusc. |
| <i>Arnell, Reginald.</i> | Colombine. | <i>Dean Basil.</i> | *Effic. | |
| <i>Baker, Elizabeth.</i> | Chains. | | Mother To Be. | |
| | *Miss Tassey. | <i>Dumas.</i> | A Marriage of Convenience. | |
| <i>Barker, H. Granville.</i> | The Price of Thomas Scott. | <i>Eckersley, Arthur.</i> | *Edward. | |
| | The Voysey Inheritance. | | *The Hartleys. | |
| <i>Barker, H. Granville, and Houseman, Laurence.</i> | Prunella. | <i>Ellis, Mrs. Havelock.</i> | *The Subjection of Kezia. | |
| <i>Barrie, J. M.</i> | *The Twelve Pound Look. | <i>Esmond, H. V.</i> | One Summer's Day. | |
| | The Will. | <i>Fyfe, Hamilton.</i> | *Race Suicide. | |
| <i>Beaumont and Fletcher.</i> | The Knight of the Burning Pestle. | <i>Galsworthy, John.</i> | The Fugitive. | The Pigeon. |
| <i>Bell, J. J.</i> | The Pie in the Oven. | | Justice. | Silver Box. |
| <i>Bell, Lady.</i> | The Way the Money Goes. | | The Mob. | Strife. |
| <i>Bennett, Arnold.</i> | Cupid and Common Sense. | <i>Garnett, Edward.</i> | The Feud. | |
| | What the Public Wants. | <i>Goldsmith, Oliver.</i> | She Stoops to Conquer. | |
| <i>Bennett, P. R.</i> | Mary Edwards. | | The Good-natured Man. | |
| <i>Blair, Wilfrid.</i> | *Consarnin' Sairey 'Uggins. | <i>Hamlen, G. J.</i> | The Waldies. | |
| | *The Private Life of P.C. Pettifer. | <i>Hänkin, St. John.</i> | The Charity that Began at Home. | |
| <i>Brighouse Harold.</i> | *Converts. | | Return of the Prodigal. | |
| | Dealing in Futures. | <i>Harwood, John.</i> | The Ladies' Seminary. | |
| | *The Doorway. | <i>Hastings, Basil Macdonald.</i> | The New Sin. | |
| | Garside's Career. | <i>Hauptmann, Gerhart.</i> | The Thieves Comedy. | |
| | The Polygon. | <i>Higginbottom, Robert.</i> | *As Others See Us. | |
| | *Spring in Bloomsbury. | <i>Hood, Basil.</i> | The Great Silence. | |
| <i>Calderon, George.</i> | The Fountain. | <i>Hope, Anthony.</i> | Pilkerton's Peerage. | |
| | The Little Stone House. | <i>Houghton, Stanley.</i> | *The Dear Departed. | |
| | Revolt. | | *The Fifth Commandment. | |
| <i>Cannan, Gilbert.</i> | *Mary's Wedding. | | Hindle Wakes. | |
| | *Miles Dixon. | | Independent Means. | |
| | *The Return of Miles Dixon. | | *The Master of the House. | |
| <i>Carton, R. C.</i> | Lady Huntworth's Experience. | | The Younger Generation. | |
| <i>Casey, W. F.</i> | *The Woman Who Sold Herself. | <i>Howard, Keble.</i> | The Green Flag. | |
| <i>Chambers, C. Haddon.</i> | Sir Anthony. | <i>Hubbard, Philip E.</i> | *The Crumbs that Fall. | |
| | The Tyranny of Tears. | <i>Ibsen Henrik.</i> | An Enemy of the People. | |
| <i>Chapin, Harold.</i> | The Marriage of Colombine. | | The Vikings at Helgeland. | |
| | Wonderful Grandmamma. | | The Pretenders. | |
| <i>Chatwin, L. B.</i> | Re Pilgridge. | <i>Jacobs, W., and Parker, Louis N.</i> | Beauty and the Barge. | |
| <i>Chilton, H. Herman.</i> | The Ant | <i>Jerome, Jerome K.</i> | Miss Hobbs. | |
| <i>Clifford, Mrs. W. K.</i> | The Likeness of the Night. | <i>Johnson, Ben.</i> | Every Man in His Humour. | |
| | *The Search-Light. | | | |
| <i>Colman, Arthur T.</i> | The Mouse in the Larder. | | | |
| <i>Cooper, A. E.</i> | *Choosing a Husband. | | | |

- Kampf* Before the Dawn.
- Killby Stanley.*
*Mr. Perkin's Pension.
- Layton, Frank G.*
The Ferriport Election. The Parish Pump.
- Lion, Leon M.*
*The King who had Nothing to Learn.
- Loyson, Paul Hyacinth.*
The Apostle.
- McEvoy, Charles.*
David Ballard.
*Gentlemen of the Road.
*His Helpmate.
*Lucifer.
The Three Barrows.
When the Devil was Ill.
- Macnamara, Margaret.*
Our Little Fancies. Unemployed.
- Magian, Dr. A. C., and Countess Max.*
*A Family Affair.
- Malleson Miles.*
Love and the Boy.
- Marshall, Robert.*
The Duke of Killiecrankie.
- Martin J. Sackville.*
*The Purse of Gold.
- Masefield, John.*
The Tragedy of Nan.
- Mathews, Walter R.*
*Hymen & Co. *The Pictures.
- Maugham, Somerset.*
Penelope.
- Mayne Rutherford.*
*The Troth.
- Meyer-Forster Wilhelm.*
Old Heidelberg.
- Moliere.*
The Bluestockings (adapted from "Les Femmes Savantes.")
- Monkhouse, Allan.*
The Choice. Nothing Like Leather.
Mary Broome. Reaping the Whirlwind.
- Newbould, F. J.*
The Devil's Star.
- Parry, Judge.*
*Charlotte on Bigamy. *The Tallyman.
- Paston, George.*
Clothes and the Woman.
- Pasture, Mrs. Henry de la.*
Peter's Mother.
- Peach L. du Garde.*
*Winds o' the Moor.
- Phillpotts, Eden.*
Curtain Raisers—The Point of View.
Hiatus.
The Carrier Pigeon.
The Shadow.
- Pinchbeck, W. H.*
*Lydia's Sacrifice.
- Pimero.*
The Amazons.
The Benefit of the Doubt.
Dandy Dick.
Letty.
The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith.
The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.
- Radcliffe, Martin.*
*Congratulations.
*Love's Young Dream.
- Richardson, H. M.*
*Bringing it Home. *Going on Parade.
- Robins, Elizabeth.*
The Friend of Women.
- Robins, Gertrude.*
*Loving as we do.
*Makeshifts and other One-act Plays.
The Plaything.
*Realities.
- Robson, E. M.*
*Their Mutual Friend.
- Rose, F. H.*
*The Hanging of Hey-go-mad Jack.
The Whispering Well.
- Rostand, Edmond (translated by George Fleming).*
The Fantasticks.
- Rubenstein, H. F.*
Consequences.
Over the Wall.
- Shakespeare.*
The Comedy of Errors.
Julius Cæsar.
King Henry V.
Much Ado About Nothing.
Twelfth Night.
- Shaw, G. Bernard.*
Arms and the Man.
Candida
Captain Brassband's Conversion.
The Devil's Disciple.
Doctors' Dilemma.
Major Barbara.
Man and Superman.
The Man of Destiny.
Press Cuttings.
Widowers' Houses.
- Sheridan.*
The Critic. The Rivals.
School for Scandal.
- Smith, Mary Stafford and Vyner Leslie.*
Dying to Live.
- Sowerby, Githa.*
Man and Some Women.
- Stewart MacDougall.*
*Dark Horses.
- Sudermann, Hermann.*
The Vale of Content.
- Sutro, Alfred.*
Mollentrave on Women.
Rude Min and Christine.
The Two Virtues.
The Walls of Jericho.
- Tarpey W. Kingsley.*
The Amateur Socialist.
- Turner, J. H.*
Account Rendered.
- Verhaeren, Emile (translated by Osman Edwards).*
The Cloister.
- Wickham, John J.*
*The Question.
- Williams, Harold.*
*The Rich Relation.
- Williams, A. R.*
The Street.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART.

The new Students' Theatre of the Academy was brilliantly opened on the afternoon of Friday, May 27th, by the Prince of Wales, in the presence of a distinguished gathering. Full details of the ceremony, and of the plays performed (the first Act of Barrie's new play *Shall We Join the Ladies?* being a theatrical sensation of the first order) have already appeared in the Press, but the following short account of the aims and history of the Academy will, we believe, be of interest to our readers:—

The object of the Academy is to provide, as is done in other countries, a thorough general training for the Dramatic Stage, and to encourage those who show sufficient talent, and to discourage those who do not from taking up the Stage as a profession. The Council are Honorary Officers, but undertake an active part in the general supervision of the Academy, which it is their wish to make of real service to the Theatrical Profession and to those desiring seriously to study for the Stage. They do not conduct it for the purpose of profit; any surplus funds being applied to the improvement and welfare of the Institution.

The Academy was founded in 1904 by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre; and in the same year the premises were moved to 62, Gower Street. In 1911, to meet a regularly increasing demand for admission, the lease of No. 64, Gower Street, was acquired and the two houses were adapted to provide more ample accommodation. In 1912 a site adjoining the Gower Street premises with a frontage of 52 feet on Malet Street, was secured on favourable terms from the Duke of Bedford. Owing to the generosity and enterprise of Sir Squire Bancroft and the Council, a theatre with a full-sized stage and an auditorium capable of holding over 400 persons has been erected on this site; the foundation stone being laid on December 20th, 1913, by Lady Bancroft. Mr. Geoffrey Norman, of Messrs. Swan and Norman, acted as architect.

In 1913 it was felt that the Institution was on a sufficiently firm footing for an application to the Government for recognition as a Corporate Body; this incorporation provided a more definite status in the Governing Body for the ladies and gentlemen, distinguished in the profession of the drama as actors and authors, who, since 1908, had consented to become Associates of the Academy. The establishment of the body of Associate Members constituted a far-reaching development towards ensuring the continuity and stability of the Academy. The grant of incorporation also facilitated the project of building the theatre, as by it the Council were enabled to take up an issue of 4 per cent. Debentures, which, with a generous and timely gift of £1,000 from the President, the capital accumulated from past years of successful working, and the financial aid of the Duke of Bedford, made up a fund sufficient for the purpose. In 1920 the work on the building was re-started, the necessary amount, so largely increased owing to the rise in

(Continued at foot of next column.)

COMMENDABLE PLAYS

By AUBREY HIGGINS.

The League of Nations (at the New Oxford).
If (at the Ambassadors).
London's Grand Guignol (at the Little Theatre).
The Circle (at the Haymarket Theatre).
A Bill of Divorcement (at the St. Martin's).
Othello (at the Court).
Russian Ballet (at the Prince's Theatre).

NORTH LONDON GROUP.

On May 4 the North London Group of the British Drama League gave a performance of *The Liars* at the Northern Polytechnic. The Hall, though roomy and accessible, scarcely induces the "cosy" atmosphere needed for such airy persiflage as Mr. H. A. Jones deals in. The actors, however, worked splendidly together, and as the play proceeded it went better and better. It was in every sense a thoroughly intelligent performance. We should like to see Mr. David W. Davies play real farce one of these days. Miss Alice Noble acted and "produced" the play excellently. The Group will be pleased to welcome new members. Particulars from Miss Alice Noble, 54 Mildmay Road, N.1.

BATH CITIZEN PLAYERS IN LONDON.

The Drama League has arranged for the Bath Citizen Players to perform their pastoral, *The Happy Heart*, for the League of Arts, in Hyde Park on the afternoon of Saturday, July 23. Other performances will take place every Saturday afternoon and evening. By an error our last number credited these performances to the Arts League of Service. Readers will kindly note the mistake, and apply for a full programme of their interesting series to the Secretary of the League, 55 Oxford Terrace.

prices, having been made up by a generous gift from Viscountess Northcliffe.

On July 16th, 1920, His Majesty the King in Council was graciously pleased to grant the Petition of the Academy for a Royal Charter. This is the first occasion upon which such an honour has been conferred on any Institution for training in the art of the Drama within His Majesty's Realm. In July, 1920, as the result of a deputation, a resolution was passed by the L.C.C. establishing annually two Special Dramatic Art Scholarships, of two years' duration, tenable at the Academy, for the children of London ratepayers, whose income falls within certain limits. The granting of these scholarships constitutes a most important step in what is hoped will prove in the future a full recognition of the important place the Drama is bound to hold in the education of the nation.

Full particulars as to terms, and the various courses of study may be obtained through the Hon. Sec., British Drama League, who will be pleased to put members into communication with Mr. Kenneth Barnes, the Administrator of the Academy.

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